



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Clarence L. Holte papers

1947-2003

Sc MG 718

Summary

Creator: Holte, Clarence L., 1909-1993

Title: Clarence L. Holte papers

Date: 1947-2003

Size: 4 linear feet (2 record cartons, 12 card file boxes)

Abstract: The Clarence L. Holte Papers reflect Holte's desire to educate people about black history and culture, and his attempts to assist with the economic development of Nigeria, Ghana and Liberia through the advertising company he represented.

Preferred citation: Clarence L. Holte papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Creator History

Clarence Leroy Holte (1909-1993) is principally known as an African-American bibliophile who collected books pertaining to Africa and the African diaspora. He was also an advertising executive and for twenty years worked as an ethnic market specialist for a general market advertising firm.

Holte assembled a collection of approximately 8,000 volumes covering the history and culture of Africans and people of African descent in the Americas and Europe. He collected both rare books and contemporary publications, the earliest published in 1690 and extending into the 1970s, including many first editions. This collection was sold to Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria in 1977 following its exhibition at the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in Nigeria.

Holte founded "The Basic Afro-American Reprint Library," with the goal of educating a primarily black audience about black history. Additionally, he donated funds for a literary prize, awarded biennially in recognition of a significant contribution by a living writer to the cultural heritage of Africa and the African diaspora. The award, named for him, was created in 1977, with the last prize given in 1988.

Between 1952 until his retirement in 1972, Holte was on the staff of the Madison Avenue advertising agency of Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osbourne, Inc., where he supervised the consumer ethnic markets operation which developed plans for the promotion of products geared towards these markets.

In this position he made numerous trips to Nigeria, Ghana and Liberia to promote construction projects in these countries.

Scope and Content Note

The Clarence L. Holte Papers reflect Holte's desire to educate people about black history and culture, and his attempts to assist with the economic development of Nigeria, Ghana and Liberia through the advertising company he represented. The series Bibliographic Activities, 1957-2003, includes some of his writings represented by manuscripts and research material, addresses he delivered about the black press and as an ethnic market specialist, and writings by others. The book collection is represented primarily by catalog cards containing full bibliographic citations. There are also lists and descriptions of the books in the first set of books published by the Basic Afro-American Reprint Library. Information concerning the Clarence L. Holte Prize, 1977-1986, pertaining to the administration of the award consists of correspondence, lists of books submitted by the applicants, and press clippings. Documentation regarding Holte's advertising career includes information on Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborne's initiatives in establishing American companies in West Africa. Holte's long-standing personal relationship with prime ministers Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, which was utilized by the advertising agency, is documented through correspondence and news clippings, 1947-1965. Included are files pertaining to Holte's role in hosting Nkrumah's 1951 visit to the United States, sponsored by Lincoln University, where both Nkrumah and Holte were classmates.

Arrangement: Collection organized into three series: I. Bibliophilic Activities; II. Clarence L. Holte Prize, and III. Advertising Career

Key Terms

Subjects

Advertising agencies -- New York (State) -- New York
Advertising executives -- New York (State) -- New York
African American authors -- Awards
African American executives -- New York (State) -- New York
African Americans -- Books and reading
African Americans -- History
African Americans -- Relations with Africans
African Americans in advertising
Book collecting
Book collectors -- New York (State) -- New York
Clarence L. Holte Prize
Investments, American -- Africa, West
Literary prizes -- New York (State) -- New York
Literary prizes -- United States

Geographic Names

Africa -- Bibliography
United States -- Bibliography
West Indies -- Bibliography

Names

Holte, Clarence L., 1909-1993
Azikwe, Nnamdi, 1904-

Nkrumah, Kwame, 1909-1972
Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborne Inc